

SIGHTINGS

the
SIGHT
CENTER

A Service of the Toledo Society for the Blind
1819 Canton Street
Toledo, Ohio 43624
419/241-1183

Volume 27, No. 3

December, 1990

New Braille Embosser Installed

Ann Brita Page was the 1987 winner of the John Goerlich Distinguished Service Award. She was recognized for her unselfish gift of time as a brailist, not only transcribing a multitude of textbooks and articles but also teaching others to do the same. After her death in 1989, a memorial was given to the agency in her honor to partially fund the purchase of a braille transcriber and printer for the Sight Center.

A committee was formed to determine what the needs were of those who would use the computer system.

The result was a recommendation to purchase Duxbury software, Arctic Business Vision software, and an INDEX braille embosser to work with the Sight Center's IBM network.

Duxbury is a translator package that converts word processing and other types of software into an ASCII file, and then translates it into braille. In other words, a person who knows nothing about braille, can type into WordPerfect, the word processing program in use at the agency, execute a command and print a document in



Mary Rizkallah introduces Tim Robbins and Bobby Raczko to the new computer system.

Grade 1 or Grade 2 braille.

Arctic Business Vision is the voice synthesization component of the system. It will speak what is on the screen adjusting for tone modulation and the change in the speed of the voice. It works with word processing packages and spreadsheet programs such as Lotus 123 and VP Planner.

The INDEX printer embosses in both 6 and 8 dot braille cells and can print a variety of graphic images. It will produce a document at the speed of about 50 characters per second.

The Sight Center is offering the use of the printer to its clients. A moderate donation will be required for the use of the embosser and paper.

The Sight Center's Volunteer Program is Certified

For well over a year, the Sight Center has been working toward certification of its volunteer program. The process involved a review by other volunteer professionals based on the United Way Voluntary Action Center (VAC) standards for volunteer programs.

The 20 standards based on nationally recognized practices were developed with the volunteer in mind and to help agencies create the best possible work environment for those who volunteer. In June, 1990, our volunteer program completed an agency self-evaluation and applied to begin the process of seeking certification.

After a VAC certification team reviewed our submitted materials, they sent a group of 4 representatives to complete a site visit in August. Agency representatives, including Board Chairman Gerald Hazel, President Barry

McEwen, Vice President/Communications Kathy Kozy, Volunteer Coordinator Jeanette Hrovatich, SCAN volunteer Jack Shaffer, and Family Night volunteer Virginia Place, met with the site team answering questions about the agency and the volunteer program. We were recommended for certification and received official notice in September.

Presentation of the plaque signifying the agency certification was held at the holiday volunteer gathering on December 3. Over 100 volunteers were in attendance.

Attaining certification is an important accomplishment for our volunteer program. Only about 15 local agency programs are so designated. Special recognition is due Jeanette Hrovatich, who saw the task of obtaining certification through, from idea to completion.

Sight Center Coordinates Pilot Project

Finding the correct bus at one of the downtown Loop stations is difficult at best for a person with limited vision. Buses usually only stop once, remaining in that position only until all passengers moving toward the bus board. The average stay is only a few minutes. Sighted persons read the destination sign visible above the driver's windshield; those unable to see it have only a limited amount of time to react.

Recognizing the challenge presented to blind and visually impaired TARTA riders, the Special Transportation Coordinating Council has initiated a system to allow consumers to find the correct bus at any of the 5 downtown loop bus stops.

Based on a system that originated in Seattle, each rider uses a clear plastic trifold wallet that holds cards on which numbers from zero to 9 are printed in 3 inch high letters. These cards are also brailed. The person self selects his or her bus route number and places the appropriate cards in the sleeves of the wallet. Holding the cards chest high and waiting in a designated place allows for easy identification by TARTA drivers. Any bus driver noticing a visually impaired rider will call the dispatcher, who then contacts the driver of that particular route. A significant component of the process is the training provided by the Sight Center's Orientation and Mobility Specialist, Mary Reiff. Mary will train persons to use the system, customizing the program to meet specific needs.

The system is being tested with a few volunteers. Don Stevens, Vice President Client/Personnel Services, the agency liaison to the Special Transportation Coordinating Council, assumed a leadership role in the project. He estimates that there are a potential of 8,000 visually impaired persons in the TARTA service area.

Materials from the initial portion of the project were purchased with a grant from the Heymann Foundation. After a 6 month trial, participants will be interviewed by Sight Center representatives to determine if needs and expectations are being met.

Dawn Christensen Wins NW Ohio Rehab Award

On Friday, November 30, Dawn Christensen received the award as the 1990 outstanding individual in a ceremony at the annual meeting of the Northwest Ohio Rehabilitation Association. Dawn was nominated by the Sight Center.

As a child, Dawn lost her sight to retinitis pigmentosa. Her blindness has not prevented her from accomplishing any of her goals of independence. She is a wife and mother, a leading Avon salesperson, and an active volunteer. At the Sight Center, she represents the agency through the Speaker's Bureau, presenting programs to both children and adults. She is a member of the American Council of the Blind-Ohio and many other state and local committees.

As a presenter, Dawn speaks eloquently by word and example of the potential of persons who are blind. Representing persons who are blind in consumer's groups, she works for fair and equitable treatment for all persons with disabilities. Often a "friend of a friend of a friend" asks her to talk with someone who has been newly blinded. Her solution is to help integrate the person back into the community, shunning self-imposed isolationism. Her focus is always on what someone can still do, rather than on what they can no longer accomplish. Clearly, though her sight is limited, her vision is not.

Dawn Christensen accepts award.

Let's Get Technical!

David Barber has an extensive knowledge of computers.

Most of David Barber's adult life has centered around technology. His interest in radio and television production and computer software and hardware have led him to college training and acquired skills.

A native of Ayersville, Ohio near Defiance, David entered the Ohio State School for the Blind at the age of 12. After graduation, he attended Ohio State University in Zanesville and received an associate degree in radio and television technology. After giving a year of service to the Diocese of Toledo in the ministry to the vision and hearing impaired, he sought to refresh his computer skills. He attended Northwest Technical College in Archbold and worked at Northwest Products and spent some time in an internship program with IBM.

David's blindness was caused by retinitis pigmentosa. While he has been a cane traveler since the age of 17, he changed mobility styles last year when Brutus, a dog guide from Leader Dog became his consistent companion. Brutus is an 18 month old yellow Labrador Retriever.

In the past months David's skills have proved invaluable at the Sight Center. During a recent vacation of our SCAN broadcast producer, David took over the controls at the station with the use of a few adaptive devices such as an audible volume unit meter, a light probe, a talking clock, and some braille labeling. While David had not operated a radio control board for about ten years, he found that after some familiarization, "holding down the fort" was not a problem. The SCAN broadcasts continued without interruption.

With the recent addition of the Duxbury software and the braille embosser at the agency, David was instrumental in the installation of the synthesized speech component on one of our IBM PCs. He is familiar with Arctic Business Vision Speech Output and can write software programs in BASIC, RBC, and COBOL.



David Barber in the SCAN studio.

Jim Snyder is an on-air personality for WXKR.

To the listeners of the classic rock station WXKR 94.5, "Big Jimmy Wonder" is the on-air personality for the graveyard shift. What is Jim Snyder's relationship to "Little Stevie?" Jim is only partially sighted. He and a few friendly co-workers came up with his broadcast name which is more or less an inside joke. Most of those who work all night in factories and 24-hour grocery stores don't realize that some of the copy Jim reads is in braille.

Jim's start in the broadcast business began when he "got a taste of what it's like" as a junior in the Marketing Education program at Scott High School. Working at the radio station there (WXTS), he had his own air shift, produced public service announcements and hosted weekly public affairs programs during his senior year. After graduation he entered the University of



Jim Snyder at WXKR.

Toledo as a communications major, remaining at WXTS as a production assistant, helping students with the station's operation. After two and a half years of study, he left to attend the Specs Howard School of Broadcast Arts. Commuting daily to Southfield, Michigan, he spent 8 months in an accelerated and intensive course. The school's placement office helped him to find a job in Columbus.

While working at the Central Ohio Radio Reading Service, he took an advantage of an opportunity to return to Toledo and work at WWWM. From there he accepted a position at WVOI. After a short time, he heard of a radio station based in Port Clinton that planned to relocate its offices to the Toledo area and bring with it a new format. He sent a demo tape, was interviewed, and joined the team of the area's only classic rock station.

What is classic rock? It is album-oriented rock music, the kind that was played when FM stations were fairly young. If you grew up enjoying Bob Dylan, the Eagles, CCR, the Beatles, and the Rolling Stones, you probably

have some tie with the era of the late 60's through the 70's. Often the songs considered to be classic rock were not released as singles, but rather specific cuts from albums. While most of the programming is made up of music that was recorded decades ago, the station also plays new releases but only from "classic" performers.

Requests are accepted, and often the caller knows exactly where the song is on the album. "I like the one-on-one communication I have with the listeners," said Jim. "The image I portray is that I'm not larger than life, I'm real. People who work third shift have a job to do. I have a job to do. We stick together and have a good time."

Drivers Reminded to Yield to White Cane Travelers

While turning right on red gives drivers the advantage of not having to wait until the light turns, the law puts a blind traveler at a distinct disadvantage. Persons who are blind listen to the flow of traffic to decide when it is safe to cross. If they step off the curb and a driver turns right on red, the blind pedestrian is in a dangerous position.

According to law, persons using white canes have the right-of-way when crossing streets. However, they depend on hearing a car start up to know when it is safe to cross. Cars that will cross the path of cane travelers should start into the intersection and hesitate as they are approached by the blind person in the street. By starting up and then yielding the right-of-way, blind pedestrians will know that it is their turn to cross.

Though sighted persons often try their best to be helpful, shouting out the window that it is all right to cross or waving at a blind person is actually confusing. It is best for a driver to continue normally. The blind person waiting to walk through an intersection depends on the sound of the car to determine the proper time to proceed. Once they step off the curb, they are counting on drivers to yield to them.

The next time you are standing and waiting to cross a street, close your eyes and try to decide when it is safe to cross. Listen for the sounds in the intersection. Then, when you are behind the wheel, you may better appreciate that revving the engine, squealing the tires, blowing the horn, playing the radio loudly, or stopping at a light in the middle of a crosswalk are only making the task of crossing the street more difficult. For blind travelers to be safe travelers, they need the cooperation of those with sight.

Intern's Project Heightens Community Awareness

When Jim Etzel proposed an Information Network Project, he knew it to be an ambitious undertaking. So, he designed it to be flexible and it was quickly expanded when the magnitude of the project was realized by all persons involved.

The objectives of the Information Network Project were to establish an adequate referral network for the diverse visually impaired population served by the Sight Center and to secure for the agency information regarding which community service directories are used in the 23 county area that the agency serves.

Jim formulated a survey form to gather information by telephone from general information centers throughout northwest Ohio and southeast Michigan. A total of 100 information and referral agencies, senior citizen programs, human service departments of government, libraries, Easter Seal Societies and other networks were approached. From these 100 inquiries, 134 information and referral sources were identified in the 23 county area served by the Sight Center.

Perhaps the most significant finding was the observation that although the Sight Center was known by a number of the respondents, many of them had little idea what the Sight Center was, or that their particular county was within the Sight Center service area. Almost all of those called requested additional information regarding agency services. Over 75 percent thought that the State of Ohio Bureau of Services for the Visually Impaired was the only resource for persons with visual impairment.

Jim's project brought to the surface a need for a Client Services Brochure. A large-print version has been published. It is now also available on tape, in braille, and will soon be ready in large-print Spanish. As a result of the survey and gathering of information about available human resources, about 16 resource guides have been obtained to assist clients seeking the services that are available in their own communities. Jim was supervised by Social Service Coordinator Rick Niewerowski, whose support proved invaluable. Several staff members and other volunteers also provided assistance. Jim estimates that the Information Network Referral Project took about 1,200 hours to complete. The Sight Center is grateful to Jim who extended his internship into countless volunteer hours in order to see the project to its completion.

Look What's Talking



Telephone Pioneer Bob Wiesenber has been fixing Talking Book machines for the last 3 years.

Today's technology provides us with computers, calculators, and clocks that talk which seem to us almost common-place. But when the Talking Book program began in 1931, it was truly innovative and unusual.

Talking Books were established by an Act of Congress to offer reading materials to blind adults. Today, the program is extended to persons of all ages considered to be "print handicapped." Print handicapped is defined as a person who is unable to read standard print, hold a book or turn its pages. Annually, over 20 million books are borrowed nationally from United States regional libraries by print handicapped persons in the Library of Congress program.

The Sight Center is a distribution center for Talking Books. In our service area, we have about 3,000 users. While most persons utilize the program because visual impairments make it difficult or impossible to read magazines and books in their common form, others who are challenged by severe arthritis, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, or cerebral palsy are also eligible for the service. Many persons with dyslexia, particularly school children, benefit by the program as well. Because of the generosity of the Telephone Pioneers, the Sight Center is able to offer Talking Books to qualified applicants as a free service. At least once a month, the Pioneers volunteer many hours of time to fix broken machines and put them back into service at no cost to the agency. As a result, the Sight Center has a ready supply of new or conditioned machines to present to new users.

Library materials are issued from the Cleveland Regional Library and are returned in a postage-free mailer. A wide variety of recreational reading, including current magazines and best sellers are available.

If you or someone you know is interested in finding out how to access the Talking Book service, call Loretta Turner at the Sight Center at (419) 241-1183 or 1-800-624-8378.



The Sight Center benefits greatly from the work of individual Lions Clubs. Here, Otto Adler, President of the Toledo (Host) Lions presents a check from the Lions Welfare Fund to Barry McEwen. The money is designated for sight conservation.

End of the Year Giving

Barry A. McEwen

As you may remember, in the last issue of *Sightings*, I discussed the Sight Center's increased efforts in encouraging individuals to contribute to the agency through estate planning, particularly by placing the Sight Center in their will. I would like to thank those of you who responded by using the comment card. Some asked for additional information on creating a will, others indicated that they had already made a provision for the Sight Center.

In the next issue of *Sightings*, I will discuss the importance of having a will that is up-to-date. This article will address the subject of "Year End Giving."

Over the years, this newsletter has reported stories of persons who have had their lives affected by the programs and services of the Sight Center. Some of the stories have centered around regaining independence after vision loss, like the one about Muriel. You may remember that she was afraid to "cross the river," referring to the street in front of her house. Mary Reiff, our Orientation and Mobility Specialist, showed her how to travel safely and independently.

We have had success in preventing blindness, too. Such is the case of "Billy," a three-year-old, who at a recent Sight Center sponsored clinic, had an evaluation for strabismus, or crossed eyes. He was found to have a more serious problem, a suspected tumor behind his eyes. An early discovery has rescued Billy's vision, and most probably saved his life.

These are just two examples of the Sight Center's efforts to work to fulfill its mission. These and other services would not be possible without your continued support. As explained in my last message, approximately 25 percent of the Sight Center's funding is obtained from United Ways in our service area. (This level of funding may vary, however. This year, not all of our participating United Ways met their goals.) From governmental sources, we receive an additional 20 percent. However, with the large federal deficit and corresponding cuts in domestic government programs, we are faced with potential decreases in governmental dollars. The bulk of our funding, about 55 percent, comes from contributed funds from people like you.

As we approach the end of the year, most charities are looking for special end-of-the-year gifts. Perhaps you are one of the many people who evaluate their personal financial status at this time. You may be asking yourself some of these questions: 1) Do I have some appreciated securities or other tangible assets that will incur long-term capital gain? 2) Would it be to my advantage to donate that capital gain asset to a charity and take a charitable contribution tax deduction? 3) Is it better to liquidate the asset and pay a long term capital gain? 4) Have I been the beneficiary from someone else's estate? 5) Do I have extra income this year that I would like to give to a charity, one in which I have strong beliefs? 6) Can I say thank you to a charity who has helped someone I love by a generous gift? 7) Do I have real estate, assets, or cash on-hand that I find to be more advantageous to give away over time to a charity, avoiding inheritance taxes for my heirs?

With Christmas and Hanukkah coming close to the end of the year, may people feel a sense that giving to a charity is giving thanks to the Almighty for gifts received. Yet, giving is a very personal matter. No one else can make you give, or understand why you do. I hope that you will look at your own circumstances, and consider a year-end gift to the Sight Center.

It is because of your assistance that we can continue to help children maintain good vision for a lifetime. We can encourage independence and self-respect in someone who has experienced vision loss. We can make local newspapers available on SCAN to persons who are print handicapped, and help blind children become independent adults. We can recruit, train, and assign the hundreds of volunteers who help us in our prevention efforts and with the services we offer to persons without sight. We can help to detect early glaucoma, so that treatment begins and vision is retained. These are only a few of the good things that you make possible through your contributions, not only those made at year end, but the ones you send throughout the year. We sincerely thank you for your past support, and ask you for another gift.

God bless you and yours, and best wishes for a happy, healthy, and prosperous 1991.

The Sight Center Board of Trustees

Chairman
Gerald V. Hazel
Vice Chairman
Bruce Rumpf
Secretary
Dana Johnson
President & CEO
Barry A. McEwen

Trustees: Frank J. Bartell, Public Relations/Advertising Counsel; Barry R. Brandt, Account Executive, PaineWebber; Nancy L. Below, Vice President, Residential Mortgage Loan Department, Ohio Citizens Bank; William Davis, President, Continental Capital; Thomas Day, Vice President, Willis Day Storage Company; Art Egerton, Director WSPD Radio Public and Minority Affairs; James C. Hackley, Vice President, Kidder Peabody Company; Richard Jott, President, Seaway Food Town; Mary Krueger, Attorney; William A. Marti, retired, Canteen Service Company of Toledo; Ronald McMaster, Ph.D., Vice President, Research and Corporate Development, Glasstech, Inc.; David Polick, Executive Director, Northwest Ohio Health Planning, Inc.; Katherine L. Ray, retired, Toledo Public Schools; Connie Snyder, Ottawa County resident and parent of a visually impaired child; Merl Thomas, Manager of Systems and Programming, The Andersons, Ireland Tashima, President, Toledo Optical Laboratory; and Philip T. Nelsen, Jr., M.D. Past Chairman: Edward E. Evans, John Goerlich, and William Marti.

Whoops!

The editor regrets that there were some errors in the last edition of *Sightings*. The name of Tom Paine, WGTE, was inadvertently omitted from the list of persons participating in the SCAN inaugural broadcast. Corrections are as follows: KISS FM, a supporter of the Cleveland Brown's basketball game, is 92.5 on the FM dial. The number of Orientation and Mobility clients served during 1989 was 60.

Clearance Sale

The Sight Center is having an after-holiday clearance sale of its own! All holiday cards and fruitcakes will be offered at reduced prices. It's a great time to stock up for next year. Call us at (419) 241-1183 or 1-800-624-8378 for complete details and prices.

